How to Ace Zoom Interviews For Faculty Positions

Strategies and Tips on Answering Typically Asked Faculty Interview Questions

UF Graduate School - September 24, 2020
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How to Not Mess Up Too Much During an Interview!

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MY EXPERIENCE

• 3 Faculty Interviews: Offered 2 position
• Attended about a dozen faculty interviews
• Member of 5 faculty search committees
• Chaired 3 search committees
• Recently participated in 18 zoom interviews
• Will be presenting my own “non-scientific” views! (there are different views and different fields!)
BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Settings
• Setting
• Background
• Video
• Audio

• Internet
• Potential distractions
• Have some water!
BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

• The academic job conundrum
• Job hunt can be a full time job
• Study the job description (split, specific areas, etc.)
• Get information on the search committee (try to put yourself in their shoes)
• Get information on the department
• Be yourself, but be strategic!
• Watch other interviews
• Practice, practice, practice!
THE INTERVIEW

• First round zoom interviews
  • Typically 1h long
  • Typically ~10 questions (each question has a purpose)
  • 60 min – 5 min intro = 55 min/10 = 5.5 min per question

• Final round zoom interviews
  • Different ball game!
  • Can last 2-3 days
  • Research seminar, teaching demonstration, group meetings, students, Chair, Deans, etc.
1. Why are you interested in this position and why are you interested in leaving your current position?

It’s ok to talk about your ambitions and what you want to accomplish, but keep in mind that is more about “them” than you! (What would you bring to the table? How can you make the Dept. better? Don’t be too negative or critical about your current position
2. Please briefly summarize your current research project(s).
2. Please briefly summarize your current research project(s).

Be brief! Focus on the importance of the work (don’t assume the committee knows it), the outcomes, IMPACT!

Don’t be too long, don’t be too specific or too vague!
3. What do you envision for your future research? What are your first 5-year goal and your long-term career goals?

“Get tenure”
3. What do you envision for your future research? What are your first 5-year goal and your long-term career goals?

Pre- and post-tenure

“Failing to plan is planning to fail.”

Be bold, don’t be shy!

Be realistic with expectations (what are your future peers doing?)
4. How do you think your research would fit or complement current programs at UF?

- Complementing others
- Competing with others
- It is important to convey INDEPENDENCY
5. What do you think are the most important attributes of a successful faculty member?

Do you understand the job?

**Productivity**, focus, prioritizing, multi-tasking, **communication**, persuasion, collaborations, problem-solving, **leadership**
6. How do you approach mentoring undergraduate and graduate students?

“I think grad students need to suffer…”
6. How do you approach mentoring undergraduate and graduate students?

You need a mentoring plan!

What is your philosophy?

What is your experience?

How are you going to recruit and lead a team?

Approach: Examples can be great!

Show compassion and kindness.
7. What do you think are your most significant accomplishments? Why?

“I haven’t achieved anything yet.”
7. What do you think are your most significant accomplishments? Why?

Focus on outcomes, impact!
Be genuine
Show your passion and excitement!
Don’t focus on someone else’s work!
8. Describe your work experiences in creating or fostering diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

“I don’t think about diversity.”
8. Describe your work experiences in creating or fostering diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

You need a diversity and inclusion plan!
What is your philosophy?
What is your experience?
How are you going to have diverse group?
Connections are important
Approach: Examples can be great!
9. Tell us about your grant applications and explain three strategies you will consider for improving the chance of success.

Do you have a proven record?
Do you know the funding mechanisms?
Have you worked on a grant?
Have you taken courses/ workshops?
10. Do you like teaching? What is your preferred style or method of teaching?

“I like teaching, I don’t think I am good at it, but I’m willing to learn it.”
10. Do you like teaching? What is your preferred style or method of teaching?

You need a teaching plan!
What is your philosophy?
What is your experience?
How are you going to teach?
Approach: Examples can be great!
11. What courses would you like to teach at UF?

“I will have to see what’s available”
11. What courses would you like to teach at UF?

You need to do your homework

What courses are available?
Check out syllabus, do you have one?
What’s missing in the Dept. offerings?
What can you bring to the table?
12. What have you considered as a major impediment to an ideal progress in your research program?

“Funding”
12. What have you considered as a major impediment to an ideal progress in your research program?

Problem-solving (can also be a hypothetical question)

What problems have you encountered AND how have you solved them?
13. Is there anything that you would like to share that you have not been able to in other questions?

This is an opportunity to point out or emphasize any point that you judge as really important.

It is great to reiterate your enthusiasm for the position!
14. What leadership skills do you find most useful? How do you describe your leadership style?

Similar to mentoring question but more broad
You need a plan
You can use your own examples
You can use your mentors’ examples (good and bad)
15. If there was one thing that you would like to improve about yourself, what might that be?

“My accent”
15. If there was one thing that you would like to improve about yourself, what might that be?

Be genuine

Be honest, but don’t shoot yourself in the foot! 😊

“I wanna create less enemies” :o

“I'm constantly trying to be more considerate of others point of views”
THE INTERVIEW

16. What would you describe as your most positive attribute?

Be genuine
Be confident
Fine line between being arrogant and confident
It is great when your attributes match faculty perceptions! (and expectations for the job!)
17. What is a likely timeline for when you would be ready to assume the new position should it be offered to you?

When can you realistically start?

Are you a grad student, postdoc, faculty (would you bring students?), prior commitments, family, etc.
18. Is there anything about this position that might give you any concern?

Ideally no, but if you have, here is the time. Another opportunity to ask questions or share something that hasn’t been shared before.
19. Do you have any other questions for the committee?

Yes! Many if possible! Three is a good number.

Expectations

Resources

What am I going to get? vs. What can I earn there?
THE INTERVIEW

Other questions:
Know your audience!
  - Faculty, Staff, Students, Chair, Deans
Hypothetical questions
Extension, outreach, service
Position-specific, etc.
Know your needs (facility, equipment, etc.)
Accommodation concerns? (ask the Dept. Chair)
Further tips:

• A great response will not land you a job, but a terrible one can be a deal breaker!
• It’s NOT about what YOU want!
• It’s about what THEY want!
• What can you bring to the table, how can you help the department be better?
• Don’t ruminate on previous questions
Further tips II:

• Don’t be too relaxed
• Perception of balance (moderation)
• Research/Teaching/Outreach
• Be confident, but not arrogant
• Be kind, polite, and respectful
• Avoid mentioning your mentors too much
  (be independent)
Go get them Gators!

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